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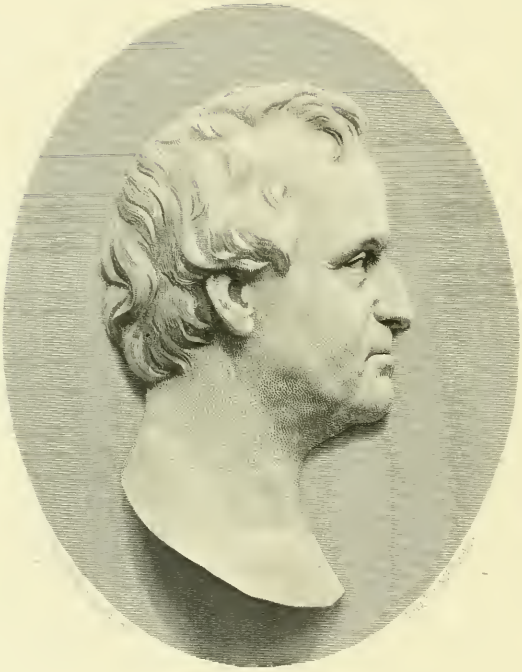

Lewis Brandt

MEMORIAL

OF

Lewis and Susan Benedict.

PRINTED FOR THE FAMILY.
1870.

F123
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I Dedicate this

Memorial of their Parents

to my Wife and

their other surviving Children

March 9, 1870.

Jno. Taylor Hall

MEMORIAL.

LEWIS, son of Uriah Jr. and Ruth (Rockwell) Benedict, was born in Milton, Saratoga County, N. Y., November 7, 1785. Another son was born of the same parents, in 1793, and died within three years thereafter. The eldest born remained practically an only son, until after Uriah Jr.'s second marriage with Phœbe Marvin, in 1802, when, in 1810, his third son and last child was born, Lewis being at the time twenty-five years old.

The character of Uriah Benedict Jr. had so much effect on that of his son, that a few words concerning him seem to be required. In 1779, when he was but fourteen years old, his name appears on the pay-roll for some military service; not unlikely the pursuit of Major Monroe, who in the course of his raid on that district had destroyed the growing crops on his father's farm. He saw service again in 1781, when he went on foot through the wilderness, some fourteen miles, in order to enlist. There is reason to suppose that on these occasions he took counsel of his own will; he certainly did resist his father's entreaties to quit the service. The maturity of the young Uriah was not what might have been expected from a boyhood characterized by such evidences of energy of spirit and almost reckless independence of action. Perhaps the quiet times which followed the turbulent condition that prevailed during his minority, together with the unexciting character of the pursuits to which he then betook himself, affording neither temptation nor opportunity for their exercise, suffered the sterner qualities of his nature

to lapse for want of use. He grew to be one of the most amiable and gentle of men, with tastes befitting rural life, and among them a fondness for the culture of flowers almost passionate. One of the tenderest of husbands and fathers, he was not less exemplary and useful as a citizen and neighbor. His great natural capabilities for business brought ample reward for his diligence and enterprise; the "Four Corners," in Milton, where he established himself, became a nucleus, around which population and industry soon gathered and continued to increase.

Lewis Benedict received from nature a physical organization of rare perfection and vigor. In advanced life his presence was imposing. The medallion now upon his tomb in the Albany Cemetery, one of Palmer's happiest efforts in the matter of resemblance, is regarded by strangers to his person as a copy of some fine antique, rather than a singularly faithful likeness of the man who lies buried beneath. His intellect was after the fashion of the body it animated, robust, masculine, and active even to restlessness. His boyhood in some respects was a tolerable copy

of that of his father. The self-will and independence of conduct that marked the boy Uriah of 1779 and '81, were conspicuous in his son; but the parallel can be traced no farther. At no subsequent time of his life did his characteristics or deportment at all harmonize with those of the meek and quiet citizen of the "Four Corners," whose influences descended upon his family and society around him, with the steadiness and gentleness of the dews of heaven.

From childhood to manhood, his life was spent in ministering to the discursive and eccentric curiosity of an inquisitive spirit, or in responding to the impulses of a physical constitution that eschewed repose. Action was the law of his being and he obeyed it. He roamed the woods or traversed the highways and bye ways at will, his guns of the best and his horses of the fleetest; for the liberality, not to say weakness, of his father, denied him nothing that he coveted. Curious and questioning, he investigated and analyzed the principles and processes of rural economy and of business as they were then accepted and applied, but he practiced them not;

for neither trade nor agriculture could tempt him to make either his pursuit. If he entered the harvest field or the warehouse of his father, it was because that, at the time, it chanced to be the most agreeable thing; a more pleasing one would at once cause him to forsake both. In these unregulated courses, he gained much very serviceable knowledge of the affairs of common life, preserved his health and greatly increased his bodily vigor; but he was also kept by them a stranger to books and to habits of study. Thus, though he accumulated a considerable fund of useful knowledge and added to it daily, he acquired neither science nor learning. His vivacity, quick perceptions and common sense views of general affairs, aided by a mathematical faculty, a natural gift that made him equal to abstruse calculations, so glossed his lack of acquirements that, both at home and in society, he escaped such criticism or censure as might have constrained him to turn his steps into the paths of learning. The social position, ample means and willing disposition of the parent favored the chances of high education for this

child; but perversity entailing no penalty within that mild jurisdiction, he ignored advantages not common at the period, and turned a deaf ear to his father's appeals to fit himself for college. In this obliquity of a vigorous mind and in his condition of only son, is to be found the solution of a fact which perplexed many who knew him, and which in view of his subsequent opinions and action, is certainly a remarkable one;—that he received only the ordinary education of a country school of that day. His wayward and apparently aimless life seemed less ominous to his father, because it was free from the slightest tendency toward any form of vice or dissipation. All his exuberance of life and spirits found vent in exercises which strengthened his body and did not deprave his mind. Neither did these things at all abate his filial love and respect. Warm as was the affection with which his father regarded him, it was reciprocated with equal fervor, and their relations continued to be of the most cordial and endearing character until they were terminated by death. To the end of his life the son never ceased to

mourn this great error of his youth, or to warn others against its commission. It made him intolerant in his own family toward the slightest neglect of any means of instruction; and probably was the source of the extreme sympathy and interest he always exhibited in the success of schemes designed to promote education and diffuse knowledge.

When the time arrived at which, according to the convictions of his own judgment, more serious and methodical avocations could no longer be postponed, his father proposed to him to take part in his own well established business. But familiar intercourse with so much of the world as had been accessible to him had expanded his ideas, and some consciousness of his own powers assured him of success in plans upon a larger scale. He declined his father's proposition, on the ground that business in the country was too monotonous, and the theatre too circumscribed, to suit him. It will cause no surprise, after what has been said, to be told, that the father succumbed to the son's desire and removed his business to Albany; then second only to New

York, as an emporium of domestic trade. This occurred in 1805.

In 1806, Lewis attained legal age, and was admitted a partner in the firm of his father, which thus became Marvin, Benedict & Co. In 1812, he married Susan, daughter of Spencer and Dorothy (Hallenbake) Stafford. In 1813, the firm of Marvin & Benedict was dissolved by the death of Lewis's father. His matrimonial connection was the means of introducing him both to new partners and a new business. The business of Marvin, Benedict & Co. had been in West India goods and the produce of the country. Spencer Stafford confined the dealings of his house, mainly to iron and its manufactures; but was, himself, one of the pioneer manufacturers of stoves and copper and tin ware, in Albany. In 1815, Lewis became a partner in the firm of his father-in-law, Staffords, Spencer & Co. The hardware business proved especially agreeable to him, and he never forsook it during his business life. His connection with his father-in-law, in mercantile relations, ceased in 1825, and never was renewed. Thenceforth, he was senior in all

his partnerships, and they were numerous. Although he was, himself, always a resident of Albany, he had partners and establishments elsewhere, at various times, especially in Utica, Rochester and New York. His activity, enterprise and public spirit, soon placed him in the front rank of the leading men of the city; and every project designed to increase its business, wealth, population or attractiveness, found in him an energetic supporter. Having taken an active part in establishing the Commercial Bank, in 1826, he was appointed one of its first Board of Directors, and he remained one so long as he was in business. He was also a Director of the Albany Insurance Company. About the same time, he became greatly interested in promoting steam navigation on the Hudson River, and was stockholder and director in several associations formed for that purpose. Directorship in his view was something more than an honorary distinction. It implied a trust, with duties all the more binding, because the consequences of neglect of them would fall on stockholders who had trusted. His conscientiousness on this point

was the cause of infinite labor and tribulation to himself. In 1833, the Utica and Schenectady Rail Road Company was incorporated and he was named a corporator. He was also chosen Director on the organization of the Company, and was continued in the Board until 1847, when he declined to serve longer. The construction of this road was attended with difficulties hardly to be imagined now. There was no precedent for any thing; a very few short lines of rail road only having been built in the country at that time. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Board, he devoted days and nights to the service of the corporation. The then Engineer of Construction and, subsequently, Superintendent for fifteen consecutive years, Mr. William C. Young, writing, in 1862, of Mr. Benedict's connection with the enterprise, says: "His influence was positive and effective in the organization and management of the Utica and Schenectady Rail Road, and contributed to a successful result in general and in detail; and that inaugurated a system of economy and practicabilities in the Rail Road system, which was the prevail-

ing one for the time." The Albany and West-Stockbridge Rail Road received his support from its inception, and he served it as a Director for many years. He held the same relation to the Saratoga and Schenectady Rail Road, and took a leading part in its location, construction and management. The public works of internal improvement, especially the Canals, were objects of much interest and solicitude to him. Ex-Canal Commissioner Asa Whitney, says: "The Canal System of the State was then (1839), occupying a prominent place in the public mind, particularly the Enlargement of the Erie Canal. Mr. Benedict was among the most prominent and efficient advocates of prosecuting the Enlargement to completion. My connection with the project as a Canal Commissioner, brought me in contact with the prominent men of the State who interested themselves in the question; and the opinions of none were more respected or deferred to, than those of Lewis Benedict."

In 1849 he was Chairman of a Board of Commissioners charged with the duty of devising a

plan to supply the city with wholesome water and made an elaborate report on the subject.

It might seem that most men would have been unwilling to increase the sum of care and labor such avocations and responsibilities created; still, there was another department in which he wrought for no private purpose, with such zeal and industry, that the wonder was how he found time or spirit for anything else. His contemporaries would not need to be told, that this field of effort was Politics. He was not a Democrat, it is believed, at any time of his life; certainly not in the false sense which has long attached to the term. But, whatever may have been his creed in early manhood, he had professed it with a moderation, that brought him neither the notoriety nor the obloquy of extreme partisanship, although he had been, somewhat actively in favor of John Quincy Adams in 1824. It is probable that the first serious and sustained effort he made to diffuse his own views among his fellow citizens, was when the abduction and alleged murder of William Morgan by the Free Masons, in 1826, led to an agitation

of the public mind so violent as now hardly to be realized, coincident with some favoring circumstances in his own condition and relations. With natural impulses toward kindness, reverence for law and order, and detestation of private vengeance, it was almost a matter of course that he took the Anti-masonic side of the controversy. It happened at the same time, that both business interests and family ties so identified him with the then village of Rochester, that he knew, and was known to its people, as well as if he had been a constant resident. Of many acquaintanceships he formed there, one was with Thurlow Weed. In 1825, Mr. Weed had represented the county of Monroe in the Assembly, and naturally enough had had relations with one so familiar with the interests of Rochester as Mr. Benedict, and who was concerned in its material prosperity more deeply than many of his immediate constituents. Each seems to have perceived certain qualities in the other which provoked mutual esteem, that steadily increased as they came to know each other better. It is clear, however, that the

strong points in the character of each were apprehended by the other, and that mutual respect was mingled with personal regard. Mr. Benedict was impressed by the wonderful fertility and power of Mr. Weed's mind; and he at once discerned and as promptly conceded, his singular fitness to be a party leader. The affiliation of two men so diverse in temperament, in habits, and pursuits, that it seemed there could be nothing in common between them, is a striking exemplification of the magnetic power of Mr. Weed's nature, which few desired, and fewer still were able to resist. So, when, in 1830, he found Mr. Weed again in the Assembly, a representative of Anti-masonic feeling and interest, sympathizing himself in the strong indignation excited by the alleged violence done to personal liberty and freedom of speech, he attached himself to him and his projects, with the force and fidelity that belonged to his character. It appearing that there was no organ, at the seat of the State Government, to give utterance to the sentiments of that portion of the people who protested against the further toleration of Free Masonry,

it was decided that one should be supplied. The *Albany Evening Journal* was the fruit of that decision. Of course, the projector and Editor of the paper, and not unlikely some of his friends, had aims quite above and beyond the special occasion which appeared to have suggested its establishment; but they were not put forth with any distinctness, nor was any claim to public regard and confidence based upon them. In the fortunes of the new paper, and of Mr. Weed, its editor, Mr. Benedict took a profound interest. Mr Weed became a resident of Albany, and a personal and political association of the most intimate and confidential character at once began, and was continued during the active portion of Mr. Benedict's life.

In 1831, the then Seventh Senatorial District had been discreet or fortunate enough to elect a young lawyer of Auburn, William H. Seward, one of its representatives; much to the vexation of some otherwise intelligent men, who found themselves unable to conceive of wisdom or discretion befitting the position, dissociated from hair less gray than their own. He was

young, and in appearance, even youthful. Mr. Benedict enjoyed unusual conveniences for overlooking the progress of public business, and for intercourse with such as were concerned in transacting it. His own house adjoined the Capitol, and then, and for years thereafter, he dispensed a hospitality so generous, that the sessions of the Legislature brought very few of position or influence to its halls, officially or otherwise, whom he did not meet socially under his own roof. His interest in public affairs and his relations to those which had a political bearing, led him habitually, to scan the course of legislation in his peculiarly inquisitive way, so that few knew better than himself what was doing, why it was done, and by whom; while his genial nature and the social habits referred to kept him so largely acquainted with the membership of both houses, that it would have been more difficult to avoid, than it was to approach, individual members with whom he might desire to confer. Some uncandid, not to say envious criticism, from quarters he was accustomed to respect, would have directed Mr.

Benedict's attention to the young Senator, if it had not been already attracted by the skill and dignity with which he repelled attack, and the ability and spirit with which he maintained his own views. The prudence of the Senator's public course and his unaffected equanimity under circumstances that might have excused, if not justified, some show of resentment, moved Mr. Benedict to admiration; and in the intimacies of personal intercourse which soon followed, the Senator revealed traits of character that greatly commended him to Mr. Benedict's regard. His position in the Senate was a trying one. He stood nearly alone. His party was odious to its opponents beyond all ordinary partisan dislike; it was, simply, hated. His assailants were veterans in parliamentary warfare. From his readiness and power in debate, his imperturbable self-command, and his wisdom and shrewdness in suggestion, Mr. Benedict formed hopes of his eminence and usefulness, which, high as they were, the future amply realized.

Mr. Weed's unerring sagacity had selected Mr. Seward from among the young men of the

State, as best fitted to eliminate a faith from certain elements, some existing and others only foreseen, on which a political party might take its stand; and which, with wise and timely modification of its professions and under submission to Mr. Weed's guidance, would be likely to achieve supremacy among such a people as ours. Account was made of the ever-increasing proportions of the body politic, the inevitable multiplication and conflict of interests, the more general diffusion of knowledge among the people, and their growing consciousness of "certain inalienable rights," as sure to create constantly recurring necessities for readjustment of policies and institutions to new conditions. Reverence was graduated by the merit rather than the age of things, and limits were set to the worship of mere antiquity however venerable; and while nothing was discarded solely because it was old, nothing was ignored merely because it was new. The spirit of the times refused obedience to the rule so much affected by Walpole and commended by his American disciples, "not to disturb things which are at rest;" and the choice presented, in the

view of wise men conscious of its resistless power, was either to move with it or stand still and be crushed by its advance. This forbade the stereotyping of watchwords, means or methods, and they were left within the pale of discretion ; but constancy, eternal and unwavering, seeming possible to an end that covered all the aspirations of patriotism and philanthropy, it was solemnly ordained. That end was :— the moral and intellectual elevation, the complete enfranchisement and the material prosperity of all the people of the State and Country. A high degree of practical wisdom and skillful statesmanship only could be equal to a successful performance of the necessary functions ; and the event proved that a portion of the people, considerable enough to constitute a powerful political party, did believe that the requisite degree of both, inspired the counsels that fell from the lips of Mr. Seward, the columns of the *Albany Evening Journal*, and later, from those of the *New York Tribune*, and so accepted them.

To the aid of the party thus to be created, organized and fostered, Mr. Benedict brought all

the capacity and influence he possessed. It harmonized with his best judgment and gratified a personal partiality to concur in Mr. Weed's estimate of the genius and discretion of the proposed leader; and it was always a pleasant memory with him that, he perceived and trusted early, where some hesitated long and doubted. Regarding appeals to mere passion or prejudice and flatteries of ignorance, as base in nature and likely to be retributive in effect, his hope of impressing the intelligent and virtuous permanently, rested wholly on considerations addressed to the human understanding and conscience. Therefore, in order to enlighten the one and arouse the other, he labored zealously to establish the organ of the party, on an enduring and commanding basis, and to elevate its elect orator and statesman to positions of influence and power. In all the essays of Mr. Weed and himself to promote the growth of the party they were much aided by a conviction, as true as it was universal, that neither expected the slightest personal profit from the party success. It was notorious that official station was

repugnant to the taste of both, and that more than once it had been urgently tendered and resolutely declined. In those years, Mr. Weed's annual salary as editor would not have covered his annual disbursements for the relief of party necessities; and Mr. Benedict, who worked incessantly and received nothing in any form, was, nevertheless, a constant and liberal contributor to the party treasury.

It is profoundly suggestive to reflect that, at the time the *Albany Evening Journal* was established, March, 1830, the controversy that brought it into life and excited the people far and wide nigh to frenzy was, whether Free Masonry should be proscribed or not? Not one word, nor one thought seems to have been given to another destined to be waged, mainly, by the same contestants and to dwarf or overwhelm all others; that, whether Human Slavery should be protected or not? So great an advance as has been witnessed within the span of life that remains after middle age, ought to provoke new faith in the tender mercies of God and in some recondite virtue in Man; and inspire hope, even

in the desponding, that the redress of many grievous and robust wrongs and the alleviation of much misery is at hand. The Anti-masonic issue, however, was not ill fitted to educate the people for the proper consideration of the graver problem; and it proved that tuition looking to that end was sadly needed.

Anti-masonry in essence, was simply an effort to resist and depose an authority, usurped by such as were without natural, legal or constitutional right to exercise it. It would seem to be the most natural of sequences, that the same spirit that contended against Masonic oppression should, instinctively, find itself opposed to every form of that species of wrong; but, in point of fact, it proved to be a work of difficulty and required much time and prodigious labor, to turn the fire of its batteries against the stupendous and all pervading tyranny of Slavery. At the North, long continued false teaching on the part of venal public men, not only in respect to the legal and constitutional relations of Slavery, but also in regard to the actual results of its workings on the Civilization of the South, and the

iteration and diffusion of their perversions both of law and fact, by presses and demagogues equally corrupt and false, had misled multitudes. Consciences naturally tender, and in all other relations "void of offense," had been hardened by pulpit expositions of an alleged sacredness of origin, and assurances that the most just and merciful of all codes sanctioned the least just and most cruel of all systems; and by exhortations from the same quarter men, themselves free, were led to maintain and enforce its usurpations. So much interest, passion, ignorance and indifference were arrayed on the side of Slavery and manœuvred with such skill, that any speedy dislodgement of it seemed chimerical to many who loathed it, and the few who then hoped and believed otherwise only earned for themselves the title of Fanatics; although they have since come into a peculiarly rich heritage of fame. It is certain that the first appearance of William Lloyd Garrison and his company of Abolitionists evoked no applause from Mr. Benedict, although, as in the case of many other leading Anti-masons, subsequently, his conver-

sion to Anti-slavery became radically complete. If the cause of liberty and justice received some of its most able and faithful adherents from the disbanded array of Anti-masonry, it was also scandalized and betrayed by traitors and apostates from the same quarter, whose baseness and treachery are without parallel in our history, this side of Benedict Arnold and the epoch of the Revolution.

It was not among the designs of Providence that a movement, fraught with results to the country and the world infinitely beyond any the projectors of it conceived, should proceed far, without the participation of one who seems to have been created, especially, for its purposes. How Mr. Weed and Mr. Benedict were drawn to him, is naively told by Mr. Greeley himself, in the celebrated "Seward, Weed and Greeley" letter, thus: "I was a poor young printer and Editor of a Literary Journal — a very active and bitter Whig in a small way, but not seeking to be known out of my own Ward Committee, when, after the great political revulsion of 1837, I was one day called to the City Hotel, where

two strangers introduced themselves as Thurlow Weed and Lewis Benedict of Albany. They told me that a cheap Campaign Paper of a peculiar stamp at Albany had been resolved on, and that I had been selected to edit it." In the same connection, Mr Greeley says; "It was work that made no figure and created no sensation, but I loved it and did it well." The paper in question was *The Jeffersonian*, established by Mr. Benedict at his own risk, and as it proved, at his own loss; but Mr. Greeley's characterization of his share of the work is quite too modest to be just. He made it one of the most effective journals, for its purpose, that had ever been printed; and if he were not in the front rank of political journalists before, he certainly was, after *The Jeffersonian* had developed his vast capabilities for that department of the profession. Mr. Greeley, himself writing thirty years later, says: "*The Jeffersonian* was a campaign paper, but after a fashion of its own. It carefully eschewed abuse, scurrility and railing accusations. Its editorials were few, brief and related to the topics of the day, rarely

evincing partisanship, never bitterness. * * * * * In short, it aimed to convince and win by candor and moderation, rather than overbear by passion and vehemence. * * * * I think its efficiency was somewhat evidenced by the fact that, while the whigs were beaten that Fall in Maine, in Pennsylvania, in Ohio (which they had carried two years before), and in nearly or quite every State westward of Ohio, they were successful in the later election in New York, as the result of a desperate struggle, and on an average vote largely beyond precedent, William H. Seward ousting William L. Marcy from the Governor's chair, and Luther Bradish succeeding John Tracy as Lieutenant Governor—each by more than ten thousand majority." Mr. Benedict's admiration of Mr. Greeley's intellectual ability and respect for his moral worth increased steadily with his opportunities for observing them, and were never greater than in the latter years of his life.

Mr. Benedict was not spared the false charge that the Civil War was precipitated by the party he had done so much to sustain; nor when his son

was a prisoner of war in the fearful hands of the Confederates, the taunt, that but for the labors of such as himself, that son might have been safe in his father's house instead; but none of those things moved him. Before the captivity of his son was ended and while the strife of the Rebellion was raging, he died; his latest and most cherished belief being that, but for the education furnished by "Seward, Weed and Greeley," the people would not have attained to the degree of intelligent and conscientious patriotism, of which the Civil War was at once the evidence and the measure. With his own share in that grand course of discipline and instruction, which comprised a generation in its term, and in its graduates a nation, and with its momentous consequences, he was happy and satisfied; and with serene unconcern he left to such as took knowledge of it, the task, or the pleasure as it might be, to define its limits or calculate its value. Assuming nothing himself and claiming nothing from others, fully equal to being remembered or forgotten, he accepted, as a present and adequate reward, the testimony of his own

conscience that, to the best of his ability, he had put every talent committed to his charge to the use of his fellow men, without respect to their physical or moral differences, or to political or geographical partitions of the common Earth.

If he was less than the equal of some of his colleagues in essays, which required for their due performance more thorough intellectual training than he possessed, there were departments in which few exceeded him either in practical knowledge or experience. His legitimate business made him familiar with the principles and routine of foreign and domestic trade; for although a dealer in the products of his own country, he was also a large importer of goods manufactured abroad. His connection with banks, whether as director or dealer, was intimate and extensive, both in city and country. The Finances, particularly in relation to banks and currency, both State and National, were chronically in a condition, that coerced political parties to take ground in reference to them. The revenue policy of the country was settled rather by the ballot-box than by Congress, and

the Tariff question was seldom absent from the elements of party strife. In relation to such matters he was a competent adviser and his counsels were received with respect. He had much to do with suggesting and shaping the most important legislation concerning Banks and Currency, that was had while his party was dominant in the State.

It would not consist with the limits or design of this paper to recount, with even an approximation to completeness, the multiform labors Mr. Benedict performed, the sacrifices of business and money he offered, the anxieties and trials he endured, through long years, in order to advance the cause of good government and universal freedom. To do that, it would require a history of all the phases of faith that parties exhibited, of all the changes in their relations and management, and of all the vicissitudes of fortune they encountered during his long political course; as well as a narrative of his personal experiences that, alone, would fill a volume. It is enough to say, that in devising, nourishing and expanding, the political organization, whose

course at times may have seemed erratic and its aims shifting enough to render its identity questionable; only, however, in the view of such as perceived not certain steady purposes, of which the far-sighted statesmen who shaped its ends never lost sight. Whatever the change, it was never capricious or wanton, nor opposed to the main design of the party or to the spirit of the age. It is curious as a fact and not less fortunate as a coincidence, that the same lines which divided the People on questions of political economy, also separated them in respect to those which concerned the rights and liberties of the citizen. Hence, the Liberal party comprised the same body that made up the party of Protection to American Labor; and the Pro-slavery party, after the invention of the Cotton Gin by Whitney, was always the party of Free Trade. Its cohesion, therefore, was maintained without fracture under mutations of policy, and even of name; because they were not merely justified, but rather compelled, by the crumbling of ideas and systems which prescription alone had sustained but could no longer uphold, by the pres-

sure of new wants, by the irresistible impulses of expanding thought and the ameliorations of christian civilization. The charge of inconstancy to names or twilight professions was pointless against a strong consciousness of progress toward its ultimate purpose; and both the homogeneousness of the party and the near accord between it and its counsellors were finally vindicated, by the unbroken front and undivided counsels it opposed to disunion and treason. It dispersed all doubts and disclosed its true mission, perhaps not its last, in the sublime manifestations of force and patience, of love of liberty and love of country, made by the Republican party of the Civil War.

Darker days than the Liberal party saw in the course of its protracted struggle never dawned upon country; still, neither the hope nor the spirit of its leaders ever flagged, nor did their followers cease to trust in them. The day is past when any may contemn the wisdom, doubt the patriotism or deny the services, of that illustrious triumvirate, "Seward, Weed and Greeley," and escape the imputation

that themselves are neither wise, patriotic nor truthful. If the genius and capacity for thought and labor they displayed early in their career, filled their friends with delight and hope, their cotemporaries of all other shades of belief beheld their essays with wonder; and none more, than some who arraigned their principles and policy with much bitterness of spirit. The lofty courage and steady perseverance with which they pursued beneficent ends, kept hope alive for years in hearts that, but for such encouragement, would have failed altogether. And now, in view of benefits already harvested and of those the future promises, so largely the fruits of their culture, who shall say that they have not made us, our posterity and all mankind, forever their debtors?

Of the little company who shared in the councils of which this party was born, who framed its issues, organized its forces, planned its campaigns and then fought them, who moderated its triumphs and retrieved its defeats, by all of which its growth was first protected and

then assured, next to those eminent men, who comes, if not Lewis Benedict, with his fertile brain, his tireless and gratuitous industry, his invincible courage?

The hand of affection attempting a sketch of a friend, is apt to find that it has accomplished merely a eulogy; and in such circumstances, it is assuring in a high degree to be able to test, and if need be, to correct friendly exaggeration, by cool estimates from independent sources. Three of Mr. Benedict's co-laborers, fitted by long and intimate association to speak of his qualities, and from their position best acquainted with the nature and extent of his services, while, by wisdom and great political experience, they were also best able of all men to compute the value of them, have recorded their opinions of him and his works. On an occasion which made it proper for Mr. Weed to speak in this behalf, he said: "In the darkest days of Jacksonism and Van Burenism, when the 'Albany Regency' wielded with an iron despotism the power of the General State and City Governments, Mr. Benedict was foremost, in services

and sacrifices, among the few who upheld the Whig Banner. As Chairman of the Whig State Committee, for six memorable years, he was the political engineer who organized and guided the Whig phalanx. To him there were no terrors in defeat. Beaten in one campaign, he immediately set about a reorganization for another. In 1837 he established *The Jeffersonian*, a paper which contributed largely to the successes which followed. In the great Presidential conflict of 1840, Mr. Benedict abandoning his own business, gave himself up to the Whig party. Every county in the State was thoroughly organized. For two years preceding that election, Mr. Benedict's time, thoughts and energies were given wholly to his duties as Chairman of the State Committee. In 1844 Mr. Benedict was again acting in the field. Until the latter part of August of that year, none doubted our success in this State. Circumstances, however, which need not be referred to now, created apprehensions. Mr. Benedict sent intelligent Whigs through the Northern and South Western counties; and after opening an extensive

correspondence with the Whig County Committees, went West himself. The result of his inquiries proved that our State was in danger. An estimate, based upon information thus obtained, gave our opponents a majority. This information was communicated to our leading friends, in September, accompanied with suggestions which it was believed would save the State. Those, however, who subsequently abused us for losing the State, insisted that there was no danger. Again early in October, Mr. Benedict renewed his warnings, and urged immediate and efficient action. Mr. Clay was then our Candidate for President and Mr. Fillmore for Governor. Mr. Benedict, foreseeing their danger, marked out a plan which promised to save both; but strange as it may seem, Mr. Benedict was thwarted in his efforts to save the State by the advice of a gentleman whom Mr. Fillmore has recently appointed a Foreign Minister. We impugn not the motives of that Gentleman. The fatal error was in his judgment. Believing, as he and another gentleman then present did believe, that the State was

abundantly safe without the effort suggested by Mr. Benedict, *their* counsels prevailed, and all was lost." (*Albany Evening Journal*, Oct. 5, 1850).

Gov. Seward addressing him, in 1843, wrote: "I owe a debt of everlasting gratitude to Weed, which I shall never repudiate. And to you I am sensible I am scarcely less indebted. With all his talent, his wisdom, his sagacity and his virtues, there would have been no successful Whig party without your energetic and indomitable efforts; and but for your generosity towards me, I should have been a stranger to all benefits of the party success. These obligations I have always held in more cherishing remembrance, because I knew that your motives were free from selfishness and every kind of interest. I should have no satisfaction in remembering the favors thus lavished upon me, if I had not the consciousness of having endeavored to elevate the Administration to the standard of its wisest and most disinterested friends."

Mr. Greeley says: "When I first met Lewis Benedict (in 1837) he was more than fifty years old. Directness, shrewdness, quickness of ob-

servation and inflexible decision, were his leading characteristics. He was eminently and emphatically a man of business. He used no more words than were necessary, and having formed and expressed his opinion was not easily moved to reconsider the matter. His interest in public affairs was profound and eager; but he had no desire to be conspicuous even in movements which he inspired and directed. He had no dream of ever holding office, no wish to be known as a wielder of authority or power. He sought success through the diffusion of intelligence, the enlightenment of the masses. For the arts of the demagogue he had a profound contempt; for the villainies of the ballot box stuffer, the miscounter of votes fairly cast, he cherished an intense and righteous detestation. Others were more widely known and enjoyed a far greater popularity; but of the men whose incessant exertions and sacrifices contributed to wrest our State from democratic control through the protracted, arduous struggle of 1837–40, hardly one labored more efficiently than Lewis Benedict."

In domestic and social relations Mr. Benedict revealed softnesses and sympathies, which a somewhat *brusque* manner and a certain positiveness in statement, quite common with him, gave no token that he possessed. Such as met him only in the struggles and competitions of ordinary life and business, might have pronounced him too intolerant of errors or differences of opinion, and too dogmatic, to be either genial in nature or charitable in spirit; but all who knew him in his private ways would have dissented from such a conclusion. His high respect for science and learning and his desire to promote their diffusion have been already hinted at; but it is due to his memory to state, that, although he was not formally a member of any church, his view of agencies suitable to the end he desired was comprehensive enough to include every means of instruction devised by religious thoughtfulness. Thus while he was generously aiding and patronizing secular institutions and schemes, both by money and influence, he was habitually and for conscience sake, a contributor to the support of every enterprise that promised

to increase the knowledge and elevate the morals of the youth of the country. The poor whether of the church or the street, were always objects of his regard; and during many years it was his custom to consider their wants in connection with those of his own household, and provide for both. The chief trouble these benefactions cost him was to hide the knowledge of them from all but the beneficiaries themselves. His practical concern with public questions and party management made him acquainted with men of parallel pursuits and position of every kind of political belief; and it was one of his pleasures to assemble in his own house guests so opposed in sentiment to himself, and sometimes to each other, that any host might have hesitated to bring them together; as if to demonstrate how rigorously he excluded from the sacred retreats of private life, the asperities and antagonisms in which none indulged more freely than himself outside of those inclosures. These generous and hospitable modes characterized his domestic and social life during his long career as merchant and politician. When advanced

years set for him the lesson they spare no man of like standing and pursuits, such was the modesty of his nature that he accepted and learned it, in the absence of all self-consciousness that age had impaired his discretion. And when the new generation came seeking its rightful place on the stage of human action, he welcomed and made way for it with alacrity; retiring himself with dignity and composure that had their origin and support in a conviction, that he had so acted an important part, that it would not become him to claim exemption from a remorseless rule, or expose himself to suspicion, even at the hands of the thoughtless or unjust, that he inclined to "lag superfluous on the stage." His numerous family, a large circle of relatives and some attached friends, preserved cheerfulness in his house; and an accumulation of unsettled affairs, the legacy of forty years of active mercantile business, gave employment to all the time he was willing to spare from the contemplation of public affairs and scrutiny of the action of public men. In his latter years, though at times annoyed by the

approaches of the malady that finally caused his death, he was seldom confined to his house, and his habits, both of mind and body, continued to be active until his mortal sickness supervened.

On the fourteenth of January, 1862, his house was the scene of one of those festivities, occasions for which, if not altogether rare, are at least not common. It was the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage and he commemorated it by a Golden Wedding. The occurrence was one of great interest in his family and among his friends, and called forth many evidences of joy and respect. The unusual degree of health and vigor exhibited by the venerable couple was a theme of remark and congratulation among their guests. Especially noticeable was it that, a benignant Providence had led the husband to the age of seventy-seven and the wife to that of seventy-one, sparing both not only the infirmity of body common to that stage of life, but even the slightest premonitory symptom of the atrophy of mind which so often enervates the blessing of "length of days." Beyond some blanching of the hair and some furrowing of the cheek, the accepted

signs of old age were altogether wanting. The burden of years had bowed neither, nor did speech or manner foreshadow the near approach of decrepitude or decay; but erect in figure and vivacious in spirit, they received their friends as they might have done forty years earlier. Notwithstanding the expectation of life, reasonably justified by his high physical and mental condition on that evening, in six months thereafter, Lewis Benedict had no existence, save in memory. He died July 15, 1862.

His wife survived him more than seven years, dying December 30, 1869, in her seventy-ninth year. This prolongation of life appeared to be due partly to physical causes, but largely to moral ones. Her assiduous personal performance of the functions of housekeeping, to which, both taste and habit inclined her, involved so much bodily exercise that she preserved her health under a degree of seclusion in her own house, that would seem not to favor such a result. When this class of duties was discharged her immediate and constant recourse was to reading; and thus stagnation of mind was pre-

cluded. Sorrow for the dead, love for the living, the obligations of good neighborhood and the practice of religious services and duties, kept her moral sensibilities animate and tender. A course of life better adapted to foster physical health and strength, and to develop the most amiable and useful qualities of our common nature, could hardly have been devised.

Without the slightest consciousness that it could be well indicated by so technical a name, she really exemplified by her "walk and conversation" a well digested system of philosophy; one that proved adequate to sustain and comfort her under all the trials of a life, which if rich in prosperity for the most part, was by no means free from adversity. The doctrine of Chance found no refuge within her system. Design reigned over it without a rival. Life, in her view, was void of accidents; its joys and its sorrows were at once referred to the volition of a will directed by an intelligence higher than her own, and tempered by a kindness even tenderer than her own. Every dispensation of Providence, whether it caused her heart to leap for joy or

overflow with grief, was accepted as a manifestation of administrative wisdom beyond her comprehension, or of a love whose depths she could not fathom; and her vocation was, either to rejoice with reverence, or mourn "not as those without hope." The death of her husband, the most poignant of her distresses, she bore with anguish justified by her love for the lost and that showed the thoroughness of her humanity; and yet with faith and patience that demonstrated the energy of her trust in the wisdom and mercy which guided the hand that smote her. During her long Christian course, and at the time of her death she was, with a single exception, the most aged member of her church, she was exemplary in discharging the duties that belonged to her profession, and careful not to omit such as were due to those not "of the household of faith." It was a beautiful testimony to the equitable character of her convictions, that in her scheme of Christian duty the claims of both God and Man were regarded; and she felt that she had no more right to withhold from "Cæsar the things that are

Cæsar's," than from "God, the things that are God's." She respected the image of her Maker wherever it had pleased him to impress it, and she recognized His temple in every human being no matter with what hue the Creator might have colored his work. The generous and catholic spirit that glowed in her husband greatly added to her facilities to meet the calls of duty and conscience; for she but pleased him while she refreshed her own soul, by devoting his substance liberally but discreetly, to the spreading of gospel truth, the diffusion of Christian morals and the alleviation of human want and suffering.

The way she most affected, however, was, according to her sensitive and retiring nature, "along the cool sequestered vale of life;" for, as has been intimated, general society had but few charms for her, although her own house had been one of its constant resorts. Her tastes were strongly domestic and her habits conformed to them to the uttermost degree her social duties and position would permit. Her most winning appearance, perhaps, was in the place she most coveted; — at her own fireside. There,

surrounded by her family and encouraged by such attention as proceeds from love and respect, from her quiet seat, she dispensed the treasures of memory and the fruits of reflection; interspersed with counsels that were timely and justified by her experience of life. Familiar as she was with the family histories of the circle which composed the society of her early days, she had no remembrances for the passages which the dictates of a kind heart and regard for social peace, suggested were better forgotten than recalled; and of all her inculcations none were more frequent or earnest, or better enforced by her own practice, than such as commended forbearance and charity in speech. Among the most fixed of her customs was, after the evening lamp had been lighted, to give her attention to the daily journals. From girlhood she had been accustomed to read aloud, first for her father, then for her husband; and having become accomplished in the art she continued to use it for the pleasure and advantage of her family. By these means she appropriated as much as she imparted; and it followed by the

aid of a retentive memory, that she kept herself informed as to public affairs and matters of general interest, and she seldom withheld such speculations as their nature and condition suggested.

When the Civil War broke out, and her son was in the Union army, her diligence in gleaning both fact and doctrine from the newspapers was quickened; and she analysed them with the best powers of her mind and conscience, to the obvious increase of her moral force and capacity. Few statesmen comprehended the causes or consequences of the war, few military men, its events, more accurately than she did. Her *impromptu* criticisms of men and measures often surprised her auditors by their depth and shrewdness; and not seldom were the faith and courage of others renewed and fortified by her interpretation of the same handwriting that had filled them with terror. The *New York Tribune* and the *Independent* became as necessary to her as her daily bread; and gathering inspiration from their stirring appeals, she rendered to others their patriotic exhortations, with a fervency and

impressiveness that seemed to inspire them anew. When a Confederate volley sent her son to death, in the battle of Pleasant Hill, and shattered her own heart, she mourned indeed like bereaved Rachel of old; but neither the cloud of the battle, nor the mists of her own grief, were dense enough to hide from her eyes certain compensations inhering in the justness and holiness of the cause for which he died, and in the wealth of the harvest yet to be reaped by mankind from that sowing of blood; nor did she cease to uphold the national cause, by act, by speech and by prayer, as if her heart had not been wrung. No disloyal utterance escaped her rebuke, no disloyal citizen, her contempt, while the war lasted; and one of the most grievous of her spiritual trials was, perhaps, after the war, when she strove to forgive those who, in her judgment, had been false to God, to Man and to their Country. In other days, a less degree of self-sacrificing and earnest love of humanity, of liberty and of country, than she exhibited, has rescued the name of more than one woman from oblivion; but the times will be

evil indeed when such an exemplar of those virtues, as Susan Benedict, shall fail to receive the respect and gratitude of the loyal and humane to whom these presents may come.

Such traits as might have been looked for, from the mixed nature of the parentage of Mrs. Benedict and her training, appeared in her with more than ordinary distinctness. The qualities of order and neatness, proverbially important constituents of Dutch character, she inherited from a Mother of that race and in abundant measure; while her education and culture, after the New England pattern, developed moral characteristics and mental habitudes that might have contented a Puritan. The latter was the work of her Father, a New England man; and of course, such proclivities were not checked by her marriage to a Husband of like origin.

In the earlier portion of her married life, while family cares and household duties left her few waking hours for other pursuits, opportunity to gratify her taste for reading and reflection was somewhat limited; but, after the maturity of

her children, and still more after the death of her husband and son, she remitted to others many of the cares which theretofore had been her own, and devoted much time to reading and meditation. Every day brought some contribution to her fund of knowledge, or revealed some access of capability to turn her acquisitions to account. Her views of affairs, whether public or private, became broader and clearer, her observations more acute, her counsels wiser; and while a general and increasing elevation was discernible throughout her deportment, her tone and manner appreciably softened. She grew meeker in spirit as she waxed stronger in mind, was more placable than ever though always prone to forgive, more charitable toward dissent, though never intolerant; and contrary to common experience, in her last illness, exercised powers both of memory and of judgment with a force and precision not equalled in all her previous life. With entire submissiveness to the divine will and self-possession not less complete, yet in a frame of mind as far removed from presumption or indifference as it was from

fear, and by the light of That Countenance which her last prayer supplicated might shine upon her, she met and conquered her last and only enemy Death, taking from him his sting and from the Grave its victory by the omnipotent influences of Christian Faith and Hope; a demonstration all the more conclusive, because it would seem that a Greater than either had constrained both Age and Disease to respect her moral and intellectual faculties; that, with them in their best estate, she might show the sufficiency of the Grace of God for the needs of that supreme hour, which, better than the longest life, proves the insufficiency of the mightiest of the props and stays that the Art of Man can provide from the resources of this world.

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